

thoughts for profitable reflection and guidance.

We think it may be easily proved that, if a Church is to be a living Church, as God and Christ design all churches should be, if its members are to be living members, there must be much more than the mere external facts and circumstances now mentioned. The Church which fulfils its appointed function is sometimes represented in Scripture as a tree in the garden of God, and sometimes an army in the service of its divine Master. These comparisons may so far illustrate our subject. A strong, living, fruit-bearing tree will be instinct with life in all its branches. An army that is really to carry forward the standard and the cause of Christ must be one where every heart is valiant, and the sentiment of loyalty in every breast is deep and true. Leaves and boughs, and even fruit, can be simulated upon canvass in the scenery of a stage, but it does not need the skill of the gardener or husbandman to know that from such semblances of reality nothing in the harvest is borne to fill the garner or the store. A skilful array of the colours and the attendants upon an army have been known to frighten a timid foe, but our adversary is not so easily appalled—our fight is not so easily fought. We need, for the Church's conflict and against the Church's enemy, to have every arm strong, and every eye clear, and every heart true. In a word, if our Church is to be a living Church, all its members must realize, in the warmth and strength of their own spiritual sympathies, and the cordiality of their individual devotion to Christ, that for Him they desire to bear fruit, and carry where they can the sword of His truth.

It cannot admit of reasonable doubt that all members of the Christian Church have some duty assigned to them by God. God sends no one into the world without allotting to them some trust, of which He gives them the charge. In His arrangements, He makes no provision for moral supernumeraries or spiritual sinecures. Each individual, however obscure in position, however meanly gifted with intellect, or influence, or wealth, has a moral and spiritual talent given for use. Each has a commission of one kind or another, of greater importance or of less, to execute. Our Lord's parable of the talents very clearly brings out this. In it He represents all mankind as embraced under three classes. One of them had "ten talents," another had "five," and another had "one." No man was without talents, and no man was excused if he did not faithfully make use of the talent which he had. The man with five talents was not censured because he had not originally ten talents, but he was rewarded because he used his five talents well. The man with one talent was not blamed because his original endowment was so small, but he was made amenable to the penalty he incurred by not using the talent he had got. For

Christ desired all men to know that every man has a talent, and that the right use of their talent is a trust assigned to them by God.

The same truth is more fully unfolded by Paul in the 12th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians. The apostle gives an enunciation of the different gifts that were possessed by the early Church; and when he has done so, he goes on to apply what he had to say by deducing and enforcing general arguments and truths. The illustration he employs is a very simple but a very apt one. There are he says, many "members" or parts needed to make up a human body: there are "the hand" "the foot" "the eye." An eye of itself would not make a body, no more would an ear, no more would a hand; but eye, ear, hand, &c., when combined, make a body; and so, by parity of reasoning, is it with the Christian Church. It also is a complete body, but only complete in the union and co-existence of its various members or parts. This official or that is not the Church. This constituent part or that is not the Church. The minister is not the Church, the office-bearers are not the Church, the members or adherents alone are not the Church, but the union of ministers, members office-bearers, adherents and in their several capacities and relations, constitutes the Church. Each constituent has its place, and each is necessary in its place; and more, each requires the presence of the other in its place to make the Church complete. With the services and existence of none of the parts can a lively rightly organized Church dispense. In the conjoined active efficient performance by each of the functions assigned to it does the true life of the whole consist. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you," for a healthy, lively, active, human constitution has need of them all—and so, too, is it with the Church. The union co-existence of the different parts combine to form "the body," while they yet, in their integrity and individuality, remain and discharge every that devolves upon "members in particular."

And not only this. There is another truth in the words and illustrations of the apostle distinct from, yet strongly confirming, the important truth we are endeavouring to establish. Each member of the Church has an importance all his own, and if he fail to acquit him of the obligations imposed by the position he occupies, no other can make good the deficiency that by his shortcomings is caused. A member of the Church, but occupying no official place in it, for instance, may say, "I am not, as ministers are, appointed by God to stand upon the 'watch-towers,' and proclaim His truth and will. I do not, like elders in the sanctuary, bear the vessels of the Lord; I have not, like deacons or managers of the Church, charge of the 'ministrati-